

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 SP-02 /048 W
-----088700 131202Z /15

P R 131110Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1460
INFO V/USMISSION GENEVA 2855
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
INS WASHDC
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7556

INS/CO FOR CODEP (COEXM)

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: RTG INLAND REFUGEE POLICY

REF: A. 77 BANGKOK 27683 (NOTAL), B. BANGKOK 7406 C. BANGKOK 7505

1. REFTELS B AND C REVEAL CONFLICTING PATTERNS OF RTG BEHAVIOR TOWARD REFUGEES WHO CROSS THE BORDER FROM LAOS AND CAMBODIA. SOME RTG OFFICIALS ALONG THE MEKONG DISCOURAGE REFUGEE ARRIVALS, BUT MOST OF THOSE REFUGEES WHO MANAGE TO GET ACROSS THE RIVER EVENTUALLY ARE ALLOWED TO STAY. ADDITIONALLY, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 15 NOVEMBER 1977 EXCLUSIONARY POLICY VARIES WIDELY FROM DISTRICT TO DISTRICT.

2. LESLIE A. GOODYEAR, UNHCR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR WESTERN SOUTH ASIA, SAID MARCH 13 THAT THERE ARE INDICATIONS OF A NEW WIND ON THE ENFORCEMENT OF THAT POLICY. WHILE LOCAL RTG OFFICIALS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY STILL MAKE EFFORTS TO PERSUADE REFUGEES TO RETURN TO LAOS IMMEDIATELY UPON THEIR ARRIVAL, THEY RECOGNIZE
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THAT MOST OF THEM WILL BE STAYING IN THAILAND. RTG OFFICIALS HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THE SCREENING PROCEDURE IS NOT WORKING.

3. AS A RECOGNITION OF THAT FACT, UNHCR AND THE RTG HAVE OFFICIALLY AGREED, IN THE INTERESTS OF FAMILY REUNION, TO ALLOW POST-NOVEMBER 15 ARRIVALS TO JOIN RELATIVES IN THE UNHCR-SUPPORTED

CAMPS. THE RTG HAS ALSO INFORMALLY QUERIED THE UNHCR ON WHETHER IT WOULD ACCEPT IN THESE CAMPS THE BONA FIDE REFUGEES AMONG POST-NOVEMBER 15 ARRIVALS. GOODYEAR HAS TOLD THE RTG THAT HE WOULD BE QUITE WILLING TO ACCEDE TO SUCH A REQUEST.

4. TWO KEY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OFFICIALS HAVE INVITED GOOD-YEAR, STARTING MARCH 15, TO TOUR SEVERAL CAMPS AND REFUGEE DETENTION CENTERS IN THE NORTH AND NORTHEAST. GOODYEAR IS HOPEFUL THAT THEIR COMBINED PRESENCE WILL LEAD TO A FURTHER AMELIORATION OF RTG TREATMENT OF NEW ARRIVALS. IN ANY EVENT, HE EXPECTS THE RTG TO BE RELATIVELY BENIGN IN ITS HANDLING OF OVERLAND ARRIVALS DURING THE NEXT THREE TO FOUR MONTHS. HE SAYS THAT A SUBSTANTIAL INFLUX OR HEAVY BUILDUP OF REFUGEES AFTER THAT TIME MIGHT TURN THE RTG BACK INTO A MORE DRACONIAN PATH.

5. COMMENT: IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER WHAT COULD DEVELOP INTO A HEAVY HMONG INFLUX DURING THE NEXT FEW WEEKS COULD INFLUENCE THE TIMETABLE GOODYEAR ESTIMATES. THE UDORN CONSULATE WILL BE REPORTING FURTHER ON BORDER DEVELOPMENTS, PARTICULARLY IN NONG KHAI PROVINCE. THE PRESS IN THAILAND IS ALREADY GIVING THEM HEADLINE PLAY, INCLUDING FRONT PAGE PICTURES OF ARMED REFUGEES LANDING ON THE THAI SIDE OF THE MEKONG.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEES, POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BANGKO07556
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780111-0402
Format: TEL
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780377/aaaacnhg.tel
Line Count: 85
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 545b74c8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BANGKOK 27683, 78 BANGKOK 7406
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3357237
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RTG INLAND REFUGEE POLICY
TAGS: SREF
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/545b74c8-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014